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others to do the same for French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish economic history. Perhaps this is the logical step after the new series *Handbuch der Wirtschaftsgeschichte* has been published. All single-volume collections covering so wide a field, however, should be regarded as pioneer efforts. They should be followed by more special collections. Whether these special collections should be on shorter periods or on certain topics is a question for debate. While a well-rounded collection of records confined to a certain period will show interrelations between various forces, an ample source-book devoted to one institution or kind of production, such as commercial association or manufacture, would show development from beginning to end, the genesis of history. The latter plan is coming to be the more useful, but at present it is more difficult because historical training tends toward the compartment treatment—ancient, medieval, and modern—and of course for the very good reason that it is (or seems to be) more feasible.

The service that the editors have done for the reader in providing him with a useful list of readings and commentaries on the subject and the contents of the documents, and also with explanatory foot-notes, must not be forgotten.

N. S. B. GRAS.

*Poland the Unknown.* Translated from the French of K. WALISZEWSKI. (London: William Heinemann, 1919; New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920. Pp. xiii, 263. \$2.25.)

M. WALISZEWSKI, already well known to the Western public through his long series of studies on Russia from Ivan the Terrible to Catherine II., returns in the present volume to the history of his own country. This is, however, by no means a narrative of Polish history, and it can scarcely be read with much profit by those who are not already familiar with that subject. It is rather an essay on the causes of the decline and fall of the old Polish state.

The literature available in Western languages on that grave but fascinating theme is mainly the work of German and Russian scholars or of others who derived their information or their ideas almost solely from them. These writers commonly proceed by first drawing a veritable caricature of old Poland, and then concluding that the nation deserved all that it has suffered: "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht", and people who are struck down by assassins invariably die of internal organic trouble. The Polish side of the case has seldom been heard, for Polish historians have rarely had the good fortune to be translated.

M. Waliszewski's book is largely a vigorous and effective polemic against the misrepresentations of Polish history so long and systematically inspired by Berlin and St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, his own views as to the causes of Poland's downfall are nowhere very concisely

summed up. In general, he ascribes comparatively little importance to constitutional factors, but lays great emphasis—too great in the opinion of the reviewer—upon the economic changes that took place at the close of the Middle Ages: the deflection of the old routes of European trade with the East, which, in the author's opinion, struck a fatal blow at the prosperity of the Polish cities, and reduced Poland to the rank of a poor, exclusively agricultural country, in which one class, the *Szlachta*, henceforth was bound to assume a monopoly of both power and responsibilities. This situation gave the political and economic structure of Poland too narrow a basis, and made demands upon the ruling class which, in spite of heroic efforts to "carry on", it proved unable to meet.

Nevertheless the author is obviously of the opinion that the chief cause of the ensuing catastrophe—in so far as that cause lay within Poland—was neither political nor economic but psychological. "In every stage of its career", he says, "the Polish people has been the conscious possessor, for good or evil, of a quality which differentiates it from all its neighbors, which marks it as an exception among the nations." But what this *quicquid unicum* is, the author does not very clearly state. Apparently, he discovers it in "a substratum, deeper than is found elsewhere, and more intact, of the Christian element" in the Polish character: a kind of transcendent idealism, a love of liberty, justice, and truth, which made Poland incapable of competing in the rough game of international politics with the rapacious, unscrupulous, militarist absolutist monarchies by which she was surrounded. In the Europe of the eighteenth century Poland appears to him like a "bewildered dove among birds of prey", or "a lamb struggling with wolves".

Such explanations and many others that might be cited may appear to be one-sided and inadequate, as is almost inevitable in view of the complexity of the subject; and the circumstances of the case and of the hour (the book was written towards the close of 1918) may serve to excuse a certain amount of patriotic exaggeration. The author may be criticized for great carelessness in the matter of names and dates; *e.g.*, one is introduced on page 184 to a Roman patriot named "Scylla"! But such faults by no means obscure the merits of a volume packed with ideas and vivaciously and often brilliantly written; a volume which should help materially to produce a more just appreciation of the cardinal factors in Poland's history and of the many original and highly creditable features of the old Polish state. In particular it may help to refute the still-current legend that the Poles have proved themselves historically to be incapable of independent political existence.

R. H. L.